

Yemen's hypersonic missile strikes southern Tel Aviv

Ansarullah: Heart of Israel 'no longer secure'

International Desk

Yemen's military said in a statement on Saturday that it had targeted Tel Aviv with a hypersonic ballistic missile, in a fresh operation against the Israeli regime and in support of the Palestinian people in the besieged Gaza Strip. Yemeni armed forces spokesman Brigadier General Yahya Saree said the strike was carried out by a "Palestine 2" hypersonic ballistic missile, with the Israeli regime failing to intercept the advanced projectile. "The missile force of the Yemeni Armed Forces targeted a military position of the Israeli enemy in the occupied area of Jaffa (Tel Aviv) with a hypersonic ballistic missile, type Palestine 2, and the missile struck its target accurately and the defenses and interception systems failed to intercept it," Saree said. The anti-Israel strike was conducted "for the oppression of the Palestinian peo-

ple and in response to the massacres against our people in Gaza, and within the fifth scope of the supportive stages... in retaliation for the Israeli aggression against our country," the statement added. Earlier in the day, the emergency service in the occupied territories said 16 settlers were injured as the Yemeni missile landed in southern Tel Aviv, with the Israeli military acknowledging the regime's failure to intercept the projectile. Since the onset of the Israeli regime's war on Gaza on October 7, 2023—after Palestinian resistance movements launched Operation al-Aqsa Storm—Yemen has declared unwavering support for Palestine's struggle against the occupation. The Yemeni Armed Forces have launched regular strikes against Israel as part of a phased escalation campaign. The campaign has included a strict maritime blockade of Israeli shipping, effectively preventing vessels from



An Israeli soldier inspects the site where a Yemeni missile landed in southern Tel Aviv on December 21, 2024. **TOMER APPELBAUM/AP**

reaching Israeli ports. Hezam al-Asad, a member of the political bureau of Yemen's Ansarullah resistance movement, said in a Hebrew-language post on X, "The failure of all Israeli defense systems means that the heart of the Zionist enemy is no longer secure." In another, he said, "There is no longer any use for in-

terception systems that cost billions of dollars." In an Arabic post, he also wrote, "The enemy is trying to minimize its losses in the media to maintain its military standing and the morale of its settlers. It portrays the areas where the interceptor missiles fell as targets hit by [our] missiles." Israeli analysts also ac-

knowledged that the Israeli regime is incapable of confronting Yemen and lacks intelligence-based readiness to go to war with the country's armed forces. They said the Yemeni army had since the start of the war in Gaza fired more than 200 missiles and launched more than 170 drones at the Israeli-occupied territories.

Iran's Embassy staffer killed by 'terrorists' in Damascus

The spokesperson for the Iranian Foreign Ministry condemned the targeted killing of its local embassy staffer in the Syrian capital of Damascus, where terrorists opened fire on his vehicle. Seyyed Davoud Bitaraf, a local staff member of the Iranian Embassy in Damascus, was assassinated by "terrorist elements" in Damascus on December 15. Esmaeil Baghaei on Saturday extended his condolences to the Iranian nation and the bereaved family of Bitaraf over his assassination by "terrorists." The diplomat vehemently denounced the act of terror, stating that the body of Bitaraf had been found, identified and transferred to Iran in recent days. Baghaei also reminded Syria's new transitional government of its responsibility to identify and punish the perpetrators of the crime. "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is seriously pursuing the matter through



various diplomatic and international channels in an appropriate manner," he said. Speaking at a weekly press briefing in Tehran on Monday, Baghaei said the reopening of the Iranian Embassy in Syria is "high on the agenda," adding that the diplomatic mission will resume its activities once the "necessary conditions" are met. He did not provide a specific timeline, but added that Iran will work toward the objective "as soon as the necessary conditions are provided." Militants, led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), stormed and ransacked Iran's diplomatic mission in Damascus following the fall of President Bashar al-Assad's government on December 8.

Pakistan's peace, friendship flotilla docks in Bandar Abbas

International Desk

A Pakistani convoy of warships representing peace and friendship docked at the First Naval Region of the Iranian Army in the country's southern waters. The Pakistani Naval Peace and Friendship Group, consisting of the missile-bearing fast attack craft "Azamat", a logistics vessel the PNS "Rasadgar", and the combat ship "Dasht," docked in Bandar Abbas as part of a planned visit aimed at enhancing operational, combat, and diplomatic relations between the navies. The arrival was marked by an official ceremony attended by the commanders of the First Naval Command of the Iranian Armed Forces as well as Pakistan's consul general and defense attaché in Iran. During the welcoming ceremony for the Pakistani naval group, an Iranian naval commander, Captain Omid Moghani, regarded these relations as a guarantee for the deep ties between the naval forces of Pakistan and Iran,



stating that such friendly exchanges among the naval forces of allied countries are customary. The presence of three combat ships from the Pakistan Navy will enhance educational, operational, and maritime experience exchanges, he said. Among the programs planned for the four-day stay of the Pakistan Navy task force in Bandar Abbas are friendly sports competitions, meetings with political officials of Hormuzgan Province, a warm reception to strengthen the friendly relations between the naval forces on the decks of Iranian and Pakistani destroyers and joint military exercises in the waters of the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iran used own aircraft for 'responsible' pullout from Syria: FM spox

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei said Iran's decision to withdraw advisory forces from Syria was "a responsible move" based on the prevailing conditions in the Arab country and across the region. Baghaei said that the advisory presence of Iran in Syria "was initially aimed at supporting the Syrian army, combating terrorism, and preventing insecurity from spreading to neighboring areas and the broader region. The decision to withdraw advisory forces was also a responsible move, considering the prevailing conditions in Syria and the region," Press TV reported.

Providing insights into the battlefield dynamics leading to President Bashar al-Assad's fall, as well as the coordination between Iran and Russia, Russian President Vladimir Putin has shared his account of the military developments in Syria, saying, "When opposition groups approached Aleppo, approximately 30,000 troops were defending the city. Around 350 militants entered the city. Syrian government forces, alongside Iranian-aligned units, retreated without resistance, detaching their positions as they withdrew. Except for isolated armed clashes, this was the general pattern across Syrian

territory." He noted, "Previously, our Iranian allies would request assistance to deploy their forces into Syria. Now, they are asking for help to withdraw them. We evacuated 4,000 Iranian fighters from the Hmeimim base to Tehran. Some Iranian-aligned units, avoiding direct engagement, relocated to Lebanon, while others moved to Iraq." Since the onset of a new phase of developments in Syria, multiple Iranian officials have discussed the events leading up to the collapse of Assad's government in the weeks and days preceding his departure. However, Putin's

remarks during his annual press conference introduced new details that had not been previously disclosed. Reflecting on the long-standing cooperation between Iran and Russia in their joint fight against terrorism in Syria, Baghaei noted, "It is not unusual for parties involved in Syria's developments to present their own narratives about the causes and actors behind these events." "However, it seems that some of the comments made regarding Iran's advisory role in Syria during the final days leading to Damascus's fall may not have been based on precise information," he added.

Resistance Front remains ...

While Iran maintained relatively favorable relations with some other Arab countries, such as Algeria and the post-invasion government in Iraq, none of these partnerships ever achieved the strategic depth of the Iran-Syria alliance. However, the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad and the ascension of his opponents—who have fought against the Assad government, which is backed by Iran, for the past 13 years—casts significant uncertainty over the future of Iran-Syria relations. This dramatic shift poses a profound challenge, as Syria has historically played a critical role in supporting resistance groups, such as Hezbollah, particularly during key conflicts like the 33-day war with Israel in 2006 and throughout Syria's internal conflict from 2011 to 2017. The fall of Assad undeniably represents a setback for Iran's regional interests, raising serious concerns about the constraints it might face in continuing its influence within Syria. Despite these challenges, the geographic and ideological bonds that have long united various resistance factions in the region remain integral to Iran's strategic calculus. The Resistance Front—which includes Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Palestine—has historically depended on Syr-

ia for support and logistical facilitation. Iran's active presence in Syria significantly streamlined and bolstered these groups' operations. Hezbollah, founded in 1982 after the liberation of Khorramshahr, has independently achieved remarkable milestones over the past four decades, progressing towards substantial self-sufficiency. The group's enhanced capabilities, particularly after the martyrdom of prominent resistance leaders such as Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, have enabled it to launch more assertive operations and extend its missile reach deep into Israel. Despite the complexities introduced by recent developments in Syria, the foundational relationships built upon shared visions of resistance and advocacy for marginalized groups across the Middle East remain intact. Syria has functioned not only as a key ally but also as a pivotal operational hub for advancing Iran's broader regional strategies. Looking ahead, even in the absence of direct geographic connectivity, ideological ties with groups in other areas, such as Yemen, are expected to persist, underpinned by shared Islamic principles. The possibility that segments of the Syrian population previously aligned

with the resistance could face setbacks due to these changes is a significant and troubling concern. Nevertheless, there remains cautious optimism that Syria's new governing authorities may adopt policies that align with the long-term objectives of the Resistance Front. As consistently emphasized in Iran's foreign policy, guided by the teachings of Imam Khomeini — the founder of the Islamic Revolution — and the current Leader, engagement with Israel remains a categorical impossibility. The legacy of Martyr Qassem Soleimani, who played an instrumental role in supporting the Syrian army and organizing local Syrian factions, continues to resonate profoundly. It is conceivable that some forces trained under his command may remain dormant within Syria, poised to reemerge depending on how future circumstances unfold. In conclusion, while the immediate landscape presents formidable challenges, the strategic foundations and alliances forged through decades of collaboration and shared objectives between Iran and Syria—and the broader Resistance Front—will undoubtedly remain central in shaping the evolving geopolitical dynamics of the region. The article first appeared on Persian-language Ham-Mihan daily newspaper.